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Religion, Ideology & Violence

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“Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.” — Bertrand Russell

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theoretical implications for migrant/diasporic studies. Instead, it makes great contributions to existing scholarship on gender studies and rituals of religion by examining diasporic communities.

The strongest features of this anthology are its immense diversity and its impressive coverage of Canada's lesser-known religious traditions. A major achievement of this book is that it brings the topic of religion to the forefront of diaspora studies by using a range of theoretical approaches, opening the gateway to potential new areas of research in this field. Another striking point is the reflective comments made by informants while sharing their personal narratives, which makes the study rich in ethnographic data and an interesting read for academics and non-academics alike. It is worthwhile to mention the exhaustive bibliography included at the end of the text on women and religion in North America, which demonstrates a clear aim to promote further research in this field. However, it was disappointing to see that Islam as a religious tradition did not find a place in this collection, specifically when a section was dedicated to South Asian Religions [in Southwest Ontario]. For someone interested in a systematic analysis of the role of religion in forming diasporic social organization and identities in South Asian migrant communities, one could only wish that more attention could be given to that particular section instead of limiting it to only two articles. Nonetheless, the work as a whole is highly recommended not only as a classroom text, but for anyone interested in gender and ritual studies in a diasporic setting against the backdrop of Canadian multiculturalism.

Purna Roy  
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### ***Mythologizing Jesus: From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero.***

Dennis R. MacDonald. Lanham/Boulder/New York/London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 178 pages. \$36.00 USD (Hardback).

*Mythologizing Jesus*, by Dennis R. MacDonald, is a brief introduction to Greco-Roman influences on the canonical Gospels, attempting to demonstrate the literary similarities between Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with the Gospels of Mark and Luke. In doing so, MacDonald casts light onto the literary background in which the mentioned gospels emerged, as well as the literary techniques employed at the time. Using Mimesis Criticism as his sole methodology, MacDonald elaborates on



twenty-four cases in which the Gospels of Mark and Luke imitated the Homeric tales. The purpose goes beyond the scope of underlining the literary motifs borrowed from Greco-Roman literature, attempting instead to situate the literary world that influenced the composition of the Gospels of Mark and Luke. He therefore focuses exclusively on these two gospels and contrasts their narratives to Homeric tales in order to demonstrate the literary allusions and inherited interpretative nuances that would have been apparent to the immediate audience.

MacDonald argues that modern readers frequently miss allusions to Greek poetry or literature because the names of biblical characters are often transliterated as opposed to translated (139). In doing so, literary references and allusions are not only obscured, but their interpretative possibilities also become limited to the reader's imagination as opposed to the literary context from where they emerged. To correct these missed references, McDonald applies the six rules of Mimesis Criticism presented at the beginning of his work; 1) Accessibility, suggesting that a given author had access to an earlier alleged model, 2) Analogy, which seeks to uncover the possibilities of other authors imitating the same alleged model, 3) Density, stating that the more parallels one can find between two texts the more likely it is that they used a given text as a literary backbone; 4) Order, examining the order of sequence between the two texts; 5) Distinctiveness, underlining the dissimilar literary traits that also come to connect the two texts; and 6) Interpretability, arguing that "ancient authors emulated their antecedents to rival them" (6). Following this he proposes a seventh criteria which argues that up until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, readers were aware of the similarities between the New Testament and "their putative classical Greek models," claiming that they have thus influenced the "original composition of the Gospels" (6). Following his introduction and methodological exposition, he proceeds to uncover in great detail twenty-four Homeric narrative models that the Gospels imitated.

The diction and tone is simple and easy to read, and avoids details that can derail his argumentative agenda. He refers to other academic sources throughout his book, but in general his footnotes serve as references to primary literature as opposed to developing side arguments, contrasting points of view, or referring to other academic suggestions. His literary examples and comparisons are constantly rendered in English, and seldom does he include the Greek text. Moreover, he often refers to either Christian apologists or Church Fathers so as to demonstrate that the reception of the

Gospel of Mark or Luke in the following centuries at times contrasted these episodes with Greco-Roman literature.

McDonald's argumentation is driven by assumption of literary competition, suggesting that the Gospels of Mark and Luke had to "create a rival to Greek and Roman superheroes" (10). He therefore argues that the authors of the Gospel of Mark and Luke enhanced their narratives in order to "compel readers to life-changing decisions to follow Jesus" (10). In doing so, McDonald suggests that the Gospel narratives and Greek mythology served the same purpose and function. Furthermore, by contrasting the literary parallel he confines the interpretative possibility to a comparative approach. The author also assumes a unidirectional and exclusive Greco-Roman influence as well as the overarching conventions of the ideal audience. While MacDonald's strength relies on Greco-Roman literature and genre, his observations could have accounted for the possibilities that other sources outside of the Greco-Roman influence could have influenced the compositions of the canonical gospels, including apocryphal narratives, Syrian or Egyptian myths, as well as Roman myths and deities.

The reader should also be aware that several assumptions are made in the introduction, which comes to influence how the rest of the work advances—such as "the seven authentic letters of Paul of Tarsus" as well as "a lost Gospel, often called Q, or sometimes the Logoi of Jesus" (2). Although there is an academic consensus regarding the two mentioned points, they should be underlined as theories rather than stated as a fact. He also concludes that "the Markan Evangelist...created most of his characters and episodes without the help of antecedent traditions or sources; instead, he imitated the Homeric epics," and that "Luke rightly read Mark as a historical fiction and expanded its imitations to include even more Homeric episodes" (2). Although there is little evidence based on papyri to support the argument, one cannot commit to absolutism on the base of "lack of evidence," let alone assume that Luke perceived the Gospel of Mark as a fictional work. It is also important to note that what MacDonald refers to as the *Lost Gospel* is his reconstruction of the sayings of Jesus that he has labeled Q+, and is different from what is traditionally understood as Q (see *Two Shipwrecked Gospels: The Logoi of Jesus and Papias' Exposition of Logia about the Lord*, 2012).

In conclusion, this book presents MacDonald's overall work over the past decades regarding Greek influences in the narratives of Jesus as found in the canonical Gospels, as well as the socio-cultural and literary context

in which these stories emerged. Although the Status Questionis regarding the composition of the canonical Gospels is overly simplified, it presents a detailed literary comparison of particular Markan and Lukan episodes of the life of Jesus with Homeric episodes. For those interested in Mimesis as an analytical tool, this book explores the depth and richness of its methodological claims and applicability. It therefore serves well as an introductory work to the topic of Mimesis and its traces in the canonical Gospels.

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***Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums.*** Edited by Bruce M. Sullivan. London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 256 pages. \$34.55 USD (Paperback).

In the past two decades, scholars such as Gregory Schopen, Ronald Grimes, Richard H. Davis, Crispin Paine, John E. Cort, and Carol Duncan have published influential studies on material cultures in general, and religious objects and images in particular. *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces*, edited by Bruce M. Sullivan, makes a valuable contribution to an important dimension of this field: the exhibiting and viewing of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh religious objects in secular spaces of museums. The volume brings together art historians and religious studies scholars with expertise in Asian arts and religions to explore the following questions: How do we understand, describe, and exhibit religious objects in museums? Should we still see them as sacred objects or simply as objects of art? What are “sacred objects” after all? And do they represent cultural heritage, and to what extent? This highly readable, ethnographically and historically well-informed and well-written volume, will be of interest to researchers and museum curators who seek to understand religious material culture, museum studies, and Asian religious studies.

This book consists of eleven chapters divided into three sections on the challenges and experiences of displaying Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh religious objects in museums. Richard H. Davis opens the discussion by arguing that “objects have life stories, just as humans do” and thus, “biographies highlight the ways that identities can be reframed in different settings and renegotiated in encounters with different audiences” (11). When examining a religious